

Over the Mountains and Far Away

Studies in Near Eastern History
and Archaeology

presented to Mirjo Salvini on the Occasion
of his 80th Birthday

edited by

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and

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ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY

(Oxford, 2019)

ON THE ETHNIC ORIGIN OF THE RULING ELITE OF URARTU

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Abstract: In ancient times personal names usually had some specific well-wishing meaning in the persons' native language and in connection with their local cult. Some names of Urartian kings have good parallels in the Balkans, the others are etymologisable in the Indo-European ground. Minua (cuneiform Meinua/Menua) is identical with the Greek Μινύας (Minyas), the legendary king of Orchomenos (Pausanias). For Argišti, cf. Greek Ἀργιστής 'white, bright' and 'quick' as an epithet for wind or a mythological name (Indo-European **h₁(e)rg'-/*arg-* 'white, bright', 'swift, fast'), or, taking into account the specificity of Urartian orthography, ἄριστος 'the best, first, the noblest'. Sarduri is usually considered to be related to the Urartian goddess Sardi and can be compared with the Greek anthroponymic model of theonym + **dōro-* 'given', cf. Apollodoros, Artemidoros, etc.: Sardodōro- > Sardora, with haplological loss of the reduplicated syllable. A hypothesis is proposed that the Urartian elite and dynasty could be originated from the Muškians (Phrygians, or a tribe close to Phrygians), who penetrated into the south-west of the Armenian Highland in the 12th century BC.

Keywords: Ancient Near East, Urartu, Urartian onomastics, Muškians, Phrygians, Greek language, anthroponymy.

The worship centers of the first two great Urartian gods, Haldi and Teišeba, were situated outside the main territories of the Urartian Empire, to the far south of the Armenian Highland, in Ardini (Assyr. Mušašir) and Qumenu (Hurr. Kummē) respectively. The centers of the other main gods of Urartu were also situated in the same region, the later Armenian province of Korčaiik'/Korduk' (Greek Κορδωνή) and adjacent areas.¹ Its explanation may be simple: the old center of the ruling elite of Urartu would be located there. The Urartian kings were crowned or at least installed in the office in Ardini.² They and their high ranking officials periodically visited that city and its temple evidently following the ritual tradition. It was known also to the Assyrians, who presented the seizure of Mušašir as a disastrous blow for the king and kingdom of Urartu. The supreme god Haldi was first mentioned in the inscriptions of King Išpuini (c. 828-810 BC). This cult was introduced and gained the status of a supreme god probably thanks to Išpuini's political will³ (it was Ishpuini who conquered the city of Ardini/Mušašir, the future religious center of the empire). And it is very probable that the royal dynasty of Urartu itself is derived from Ardini (otherwise, the proclamation of the god of that city, located outside the country, as supreme god would be inexplicable).⁴

From the data of that period the most unequivocal argument of people's ethnic origins can be the linguistic affiliation of their personal names. In the pre-Achaemenian ancient Orient there were only local community cults. 'Confessional' names were not in use and personal names usually had some specific well-wishing meaning in the persons' native language and in connection with their local cult. Rarely one can find names of other an older substrate language.⁵ The names of the kings of Urartu are not etymologized in Urartian and do not have parallels in other ancient Near Eastern traditions. Three of them are repeated several times: four Sarduris, two Argištis, four Rusas. Notably, the name Rusa cannot be Urartian: in Urartian, as well as in Hurrian, Armenian and Hittite languages, words cannot begin with *r*.⁶ The first two names

presented below have clear parallels in the Balkans, and the third one is comparable with a model of Balkanic onomastics.⁷ For the further discussion, it is important to note that the Urartian cuneiform *š* reflects the sound *s*, and the cuneiform *a*, possibly, the sound *c*, and the final *i* and *e* reflect *a*.

Minua (cuneiform Meinua/Menua) is just identical with the Greek Μινύας (Minyas), the legendary king of Orchomenos⁸ (the earliest pronunciation of the name was Minuas, which became Mīnias in classical Greek, and Minias in new Greek). This name can be interpreted in connection with the Indo-European term for 'man' ('man' is the most ancient and frequently occurred ethnonym and respective eponym among the peoples of the world).⁹ The Argonauts were regarded as the descendants of Minyas and were persistently called Μινύαι 'Minyans'. This is suggestive in the context of Strabo's legend of the founder of Armenia Armenos the Argonaut (Strabo XI.4.8; XI.14.12; see also the abridgement of Trogon Pompeus by Justinian XLII.2.3). Thus, one may suppose that the history of their voyage originally was a tale of the Minyans.

Armenian, or, taking into account the Balkanic associations of the names (see below), *hru/o-*, as it would be in Greek.

⁷ A series of western parallels of Urartian names (though not all of them acceptable) were first suggested by P. Kretschmer and R. Eisler, see Lehmann-Haupt 1931: 902-903.

⁸ Petrosyan 1997: 96-100.

⁹ For the use of the term for 'man, human' in the archaic ethnonyms, see Nikonov 1970: 15-16. Notably, the myth of King Minyas and his predecessors is considered as one of the exceptional native Indo-European samples in the Greek mythology, which can attest to the Indo-European character of that hero (Minyas, who had large revenues and was the first to build a treasury, is considered a Dumézilian 'third function' figure, see Pausanias IX.34 ff.; Vian 1960). For the Indo-European term for 'man', see Mallory and Adams 1997: 366-367. In some Indo-European myths the first man was named by this root, see Lincoln 1981: 69-93. In Indian mythology, Manu is the first human being who survived the flood. It is characteristic that in Josephus Flavius Μινύας is presented as a country name in the area of the flood mountain Nibur/Cudi dağı (Ant. Jud. I.3.6, according to Nicolaus of Damascus). This may confirm the localization of the original Urartian homeland in the area of Mt. Nibur, and Qumenu, cult center of Teišeba in Korduene; also, the name Minua may be regarded as an Urartian eponym. Notably, P. Kretschmer compared Minua with the name of mythical king Minos (apud Piotrovskij 1944: 47), who too, in the context of Indo-European anthropogenic myth, corresponds best to the first man **mVnu-* regardless of some phonetic difficulties, see Lincoln 1991: 40, 47, n. 69. For these issues, see Petrosyan 2002: 194-199; 2006: 51.

¹ Grekhan 2006.

² Diakonoff 1951: No. 49 (309), 330-331; Hmayakyan 1990: 75-76.

³ Salvini 1987: 405; 1989: 83, 85; 1995: 39.

⁴ Melikishvili 1954: 368.

⁵ Diakonoff 1983: 15; 1984: 203, n. 135.

⁶ Therefore, that name could not be pronounced undistortedly in Urartian: the Assyrians that heard it in the oral Urartian discourse transcribed it as Ursa, see Khachikyan 1985: 143, n. 77. The first syllable of Rusa might be pronounced as *aru/o-* as it would be in

For Argišti cf. Greek Ἀργηστής ‘white, bright’ and ‘quick’ as an epithet for wind or a mythological name, cf. Indo-European **h₂(e)rg-*/**arg-* ‘white, bright’, ‘swift, fast’.¹⁰ Taking into account the special, perhaps very palatal sound of the Urartian *g* and specificity of Urartian orthography, where *g* sometimes (not compulsory), appears in intervocal positions and between *r* and vowel,¹¹ Argišti can also be conceived as Ar(y)istā, and compared with the Greek ἀριστος ‘the best, first, the noblest’.

Sarduri is usually considered to be related to the Urartian goddess Sardi and can be compared with the Greek anthroponymic model of theonym + **dōro-* ‘given’, cf. Apollodoros, Artemidoros, etc.: Sardodōro- > Sardorā, with haplological loss of the reduplicated syllable.¹²

Indo-European etymologies were suggested also for the other names of the Urartian kings: Aramu,¹³ Išpuini, Inušpua,¹⁴ Rusa,¹⁵ Erimeña¹⁶ (after Aramu, the dynasty of Urartu probably was changed,¹⁷ but the new one could be of the same or close ethnic origin). Herewith, the list of the Urartian kings is limited (some other names of the royal dynasty are also known, but I confine myself to mentioning only the names of the crowned kings). The Indo-European origin of Aramu, the eponym of Armenia in ethnogonic tradition (Khorenatsi 1.14) is most probable: this question has been thoroughly considered in several works.¹⁸ Erimeña is also comparable with the ethnonym Armen, and the name of the patriarch Aramaneak/Armenak of ethnogonic tradition (eponym of Armenia according to Sebeos 1),¹⁹ yet there are no additional facts to support this. The etymologies for the other names are more hypothetical. However, at least for Minua, Argišti and Sarduri an Indo-European origin akin to Greek seems to be very probable. The same could also be true for Aramu and Erimeña.

The father’s name of Sarduri I was Lutipri, which is interpreted on the Hurro-Urartian bases: cf. Urart. *lutu* ‘woman’ and Hurr. *ipri* ‘master, lord’. According to N. Adonts, Lutipri was the epithetal name of Aramu, which is comparable with Uedipri, agnomen of Rusa I, cf. Urart. *uedi(ani)* ‘woman’ and *ipri*.²⁰

¹⁰ This etymology was suggested by R. Eisler (apud Lehmann-Haupt 1931: 902). For the names Minua and Argišti, see Petrosyan 1997: 95–102. In Aeschylus’ ‘Persians’ (308) Ἀργηστής appears as a name of a Persian or they ally, died in war against the Greeks. However, it is not etymologized by the Persian language and perhaps appeared there as an ancient Near Eastern name known to Aeschylus.

¹¹ Melikishvili 1960: 46–47; Khachikyan 1985: 30, 36; 2010: 152.

¹² For this etymology, see Sandaljian 1900; Petrosyan 2006: 52–53; cf. Diakonoff 1958: 38, 50; Melikishvili 1960: 440; van Loon 1966: 8, n. 29; Grekyan 2010; Dalalyan 2013.

¹³ Petrosyan 2002: 43–53; 2014: 228–230.

¹⁴ Djahukian 1963: 28, 100.

¹⁵ Lehmann-Haupt 1931: 902.

¹⁶ Lehmann-Haupt 1931: 684, 902. For this name, see also Fraydank 1976: 87–88; Djahukian 1987: 441.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Melikishvili 1954: 202; Salvini 1995: 35.

¹⁸ Aramu, obviously, coincides with the name of the ethnogonic patriarch Aram (with regular loss of the last vowel in Armenian), whose name and image, in the context of Indo-European mythology, are comparable with those of the Indian Rāma (probably from **h₂reh₂mo-* ‘black, dark’, see especially Petrosyan 2002: 43–53; 2017). For Aramu, ‘Aramaeans’ interpretation is also suggested (see van Loon 1966: 7, n. 2; Salvini 1987: 399–400; 1995: 26), which is not deemed as possible, see Radner 1998: 132; Petrosyan 2002: 79.

¹⁹ Sargsyan 1998: 123.

²⁰ Adonts 1972: 194; see also Harutyunyan (Arutjunjan) 2001: 485, 491. These etymologies were suggested by P. Kretschmer (see Lehmann-Haupt 1931: 901). It is interesting to note that those Hurro-Urartian

In this context it is notable that in the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni all the known kings had Aryan (Indo-Iranian) regnal names. However, at least one of them had also a Hurrian name. It is explained by the Aryan origin of the royal dynasty. The kings could have Hurrian personal names, but regnal names were only old dynastic ones.²¹ There could be such a custom also in Urartu, which may show the non-Urartian origin of the royal dynasty.

In the south of the Armenian Highland, the ethnic element with Balkanic connections is mentioned for the first time in Assyrian sources of the 12th century BC. Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076 BC) tells that during the year of his enthronement 20,000 Muškians with their five kings occupied south-western regions of the Armenian Highland. Tiglath-pileser defeated the Muškian troops and annexed their lands. During that campaign the recalcitrant warriors of Kaškaeans (otherwise mentioned as Apišlu) and Urumaeans entered the Assyrian service.²²

There are different opinions about the origin and initial localization of the Muškians.²³ They were first mentioned in Assyrian sources earlier, from the first quarter of the 12th century.²⁴ Several centuries later, in the end of the 8th century BC, Mušku appears as the Assyrian denomination of the Phrygians, which caused controversial interpretations. Thus, the Phrygians were considered to be the ‘Western Muškians’ and those, who had moved to the Armenian Highland earlier – the ‘Eastern Muškians’. According to I. M. Diakonoff, the Eastern Muškians were the linguistic ancestors of the Armenians, i.e., the earliest Armenians, who migrating from the Balkans, originally settled down in the southwestern regions of the Armenian Highland.²⁵ He also thought that the ethnonym Mušku is related to the land Moesia of Western Asia Minor (Greek Μυσία, Μυσοί, later Μοισία, Latin Moesia), with the Armenian plural marker *-k’*.²⁶ It should be noted that Diakonoff’s theory never been supported by other competent scholars.

The material of Phrygian inscriptions enables us insist that it is a very close kin to Greek: probably these two languages derive from an ancestor language spoken in the Balkans at the end of the 3rd millennium BC.²⁷ The Phrygian kingdom existed in the central regions of Asia Minor in the 8th–7th centuries BC (centuries after the fall of the Hittite Empire).²⁸ According to Herodotus, the Phrygians originally lived in the Balkans, close to the Macedonians (Herodotus VII.73; cf. Strabo VII.3.2). Yet nevertheless, according to Homer, the Phrygians lived in Asia Minor from much earlier periods, even prior to the Trojan war (in the ‘Iliad’ III.189, the Trojan King Priam helped them in the struggle against the Amazons). We do not know how the Phrygians called themselves and

forms should have derived from a dialect clearly different from the Urartian or should be petrified archaisms.

²¹ See, e.g., Diakonoff 1970: 41; Avetisyan 2002: 21–22. This phenomenon emerged also in the last period of the Hittite Kingdom.

²² Grayson 1976: Nos 18, 67, 93; Diakonoff 1951: Nos 2, 10–13.

²³ For the Muškians in this context, see Melink 1965; Haas 1980: 398; Macqueen 1983: 55; Sevin 1991: 96–97; Kosyan 1996; 1998: 33–45; 1999: 162–166; Röllig 1993–1997; Wittke 2004; Bryce 2009: I–II; Kopanias 2015. For their ethnonym, western connections and traces left in the Armenian Highland, and Mšak as their eponym, see Petrosyan 2002: 150–154, 167; Topchyan 2006.

²⁴ Radner 2006: 147–148.

²⁵ Diakonoff 1984: 115, 119.

²⁶ Diakonoff 1984: 119, 195; 1992.

²⁷ Brixhe 2004: 780; Ligorio and Lubotsky 2013: 181.

²⁸ For a detailed review of the ancient Greek sources on the Phrygians, see Moiseeva 1985.

by others (the ethnonym Phrygian was used only by Greek and later Latin authors). The only candidate is the ethnonym Mušku or Muški (possible readings: Mu/oš/sku/o and Mu/oš/ski/ə).²⁹ Also, it should be noted that the cuneiform Mušku/i is identical with the ethnonym of Moschians (Greek μόσχοι) of Pontus. The Georgian ethnonym Mesxi in south-western Georgia is considered as the later transformed form of Moschians and Mušku.³⁰ Thus, it cannot be ruled out that the oldest domain of the Mušku tribe was in Pontus.

In Armenian ethnogonic tradition, the patriarch Aram, eponym of the Armenian ethnonym Armen, defeats one of his main adversaries in the area, where later the city of Mazaka (later Caesaria, Turk. Kayseri in Cappadocia) was built (Khorenatsi 1.14). There he leaves his kinsman Mšak to govern the country and orders the local inhabitants to speak Armenian. Hence, the Greeks call this region Πρώτη Ἀρμενία 'First Armenia'. The ethnonym Mušku is comparable with the name of Mšak, which can be seen as a manifestation of that tribe's memory in Armenian tradition. Thus, Mšak, who built the city of Mazaka and called it by his name, is frequently considered to be the eponym of Muškians. After the Neo-Hittite period, Cappadocia became Phrygian and Mšak's association with the Phrygians is very probable. Moreover, the kinship of Mšak and Aram may also hint at Aram's Phrygian associations (Aram was frequently considered to be the eponym of the Urumaeans).³¹

The ethnonym of Urumaeans, who emerged together with the Muškians, may be associated with the country names of Urme and 'Inner Urumu' of cuneiform sources. The first of them is localized in the Muš valley to the west of Van Lake and the second is identified with it or localized in its vicinity.³² Therefore, there can be a link between the toponym Muš (Turk. Muş) and the ethnonym of the Muškians. This opinion has already been expressed based only on the homophony of Muš and Mušku.³³ Whereas, that relation is not so rectilinear: judging from the ethnonym μόσχοι, the cuneiform *mušku* could sound *moskho* or *mōskho*, which with the Armenian **skh* > *š* and *ō* > *u* changes would become **Mušo*, and then *Muš* (genitive: *Mšoy*).³⁴

Based on the aforesaid, the following hypothesis can be formulated.

In the era of the collapse of the Hittite Empire (c. 1200 BC) some tribes, penetrating from the northern and north-western regions of the Armenian Highland (possibly from the countries of the Kaškaeans and Moschians), occupied the southern and western areas of the Highland (the territories of the lands of Supani, Alzi, and Kadmuhi, i.e., later Cop'k', Ałjnik', Korčayk'/Korduk' provinces of Armenia) and Tiglath-pileser resettled many of them in neighboring regions, too.

The Muškians were a branch of the Phrygians or at least a tribe akin to them. It is not excluded that the Urumaeans could have kinship with the Muškians. The newly migrated warlike element, like in other known cases of migration of Indo-European tribes, gained a dominant position among the native population of the south of the Highland. During the 9th century BC, a mass led by the aristocracy derived from those migrants spread its power over the significant part of the Armenian Highland creating the Urartian Empire.³⁵

Possibly they lost their language already before the formation of Urartu. However, like it often happens in such cases, they kept at least some of their original names. The relations between them and the Urartian speaking people could resemble to those between the Aryans and Hurrians in Mitanni, or between the Varangians and Slavs in Russia or Turk-Bulgars and Slavs in Bulgaria.

The following comparisons are more remarkable. In 911, a region to the north of France was occupied by the Vikings, i.e., the Normans, and began to be called Normandy. Ulteriorly, the Norman invaders learnt French and were mixed with the local inhabitants. In 1066, the Duke of Normandy conquered England and the French speaking Norman-French invaders ruled the country for several centuries. In the history of our region such an example is the invasion of the Parni (or Aparni) nomadic tribe into Parthia, from where they spread the dominion of their royal dynasty (Arsacides) over the whole Iran and some neighboring countries (Armenia, Iberia, Atropatene). This hypothesis is to some extent a return to the ideas of K.F. Lehmann-Haupt and P. Kretschmer, their renewed version.³⁶

By originating the royal dynasty and elite of Urartu from the invaders that penetrated into the Armenian Highland relatively late, especially from the Muškians, we proceed not only from the Balkanic associations of the latter, but also from the fact that during history, new invaders usually gain predominant positions everywhere. It remains to add that this hypothesis can provide new, more probable interpretations for a series of historical facts: the ascribing Phrygian/Balkanic origin to the Armenians in early Greek sources (as an echo of Phrygian/Balkanic associations of the Urartian lite), the existence of Greek-Urartian and Armenian-Balkanic lexical³⁷ and onomastic³⁸ parallels, etc.

²⁹ For this hypothesis, see also Petrosyan 2002: 181-183; 2006: 43-69.

³⁶ According to Lehmann-Haupt, the Urartians were an Indo-European tribe originated from Western Asia Minor (Lycia and neighboring areas) which had many similarities with the Greeks and some other tribes (Cretans, Etruscans). Coming from the West, they dominated over the natives of the Armenian Highland (see, e.g., Lehmann-Haupt 1936). According to Kretschmer, the royal dynasty of Urartu had a Phrygian origin, which was accepted also by others (apud Piotrovskij 1944: 47-48; 1959: 49).

³⁷ The most obvious Armeno-Urartian-Greek parallels are Arm. *awel*, *yawelul*, Urart. *abili-d(u)-*, Greek *ὄφελμα*, *ὄφελω* (in Armenian and Greek with two meanings: 'broom' and 'to add'), and Arm. *burgn* 'tower', Urart. *burgana(ni)*, Greek *πύργος* (with close meanings). Cf. also Armenian-Balkanic common roots: e.g., *aliwr* 'flour', *alawrik* 'mill', *alues* 'fox', *damban* 'tomb', *t'eli* 'elm tree', *kalin* 'nut', *kamurj* 'bridge', *mozi* 'calf', *siwn* 'pillar', etc. (see Djahukian 1987: 296-300; Martirosyan 2007; 2013). The word *ark'ay* 'king' is very interesting with its ancient derivative *ark'unik* 'kingdom, royal court', with Greek parallels of close meaning (see Beekes 2009: 145-146), which could be a loan word from the language of Urartian elite (that word does not exist in Urartian, cf. Urart. *ereli* 'king').

³⁸ Cf., e.g., the toponyms of Tawros, Ainos, Artos, Grgios in the south of historic Armenia.

²⁹ Kopanias 2012: 215.

³⁰ For the relation of the ethnonyms of the Mushkians, Moschians and Mesxetians, see Diakonoff 1984: 115-119; cf. Melikishvili 1954: 410-411; Melikishvili and Lordkipanidze 1989: 220, 395; Kavtaradze 1997: 353-354.

³¹ For Aram and Mšak as the eponyms of Urumaeans and Mushkians, see, e.g., Kapantsyan 1956: 147; Manandyan 1984: 559; van Loon 1966: 26, n. 131; Yeremyan 1971: 234, 237; Sargsyan 1988: 59. However, it should be noted that Urumaeans' association with Aram and Armenians is not evident and the question of ethnic affiliation of the Urumaeans remains open, see Diakonoff 1984: 120-121.

³² Harutyunyan (Arutjunjan) 1985: 210-212.

³³ See, e.g., Diakonoff 1984: 115, 195 n. 87; 1992; Djahukian 1970: 78.

³⁴ Petrosyan 2002: 151-153. For the **skh* > *š* change, see Djahukian 1984: 158-160.

The best parallels of some names of the leaders and kings of the west and north-west regions of the Armenian Highland in the 15th-14th centuries BC are also from the Balkans, the Macedonian-Phrygian tradition. The name of Midaš/Mitaš of Paḫḫuwa, who rebelled against the Hittites in the end of the 15th century BC, is identical with the name of the Phrygian King Midas (8th century BC). According to a legend, Midas was the king of Brigs in Macedonia, who together with his clansmen passed to Asia Minor and founded Phrygia. He was expelled by Karanos, who established the dynasty of Alexander of Macedon (Herod. VII.73; Plutarch 'Alexander' II; Justin VII.1.11). Karanos (Κάρανος, cf. Maced. κόραννος 'king', Greek κόραννος 'chief', of native Indo-European origin) in its turn is comparable with Karanniš (rarely read as Lanniš), the name of a king of Hayasa of the 14th century BC. The name of another king of Hayasa Ḫukkanas may probably be Anatolian, cf. Hitt. *ḫuḫḫa-*, Lyc. *xuḡa* 'grandfather'. However, this root is also found in the Macedonian name Γυγαία, i.e., there could be Anatolian influence on early Macedonian, too. Thus it cannot be ruled out that some rulers of that region since the 15th century BC could had the same or close origins with the ruling elite of Urartu in the 9th-7th centuries BC. Here also the best candidates are the Mushkians: the land of the Pontic Moschians was situated in this region.³⁹

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³⁹ For those names, see Djahukian 1970: 79-81; Petrosyan 2002: 154, n. 523; 2017a: 109-113, with literature; Kosyan 2014: 279.

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